

Message Text

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FOL REPEAT OF ATHENS 6392 TO SECSTATE INFO ANKARA NICOSIA
THESSALONIKI NATO USCILCEUR USCINCUSNAVEUR NAVDET SOUDA BAY
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SUBJECT: GREEK PRESS GIVES HEAVY PLAY TO MISSING

AMMUNITION AT SOUDA BAY

REF: STATE 198727

1. PROMPTED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES STEVEN ROBERTS STORY
(REFTEL) AND WIRE SERVICE REPORTS, THE GREEK PRESS TODAY (AUGUST 22)
GAVE HEAVY FRONT PAGE TREATMENT TO THE MISSING AMMUNITION STORY.
THE GENERAL TENOR OF THE PRESS ACCOUNTS HAS BEEN THAT THE STORY IS A
TACTICAL MOVE BY THE FORD ADMINISTRATION TO REINFORCE ITS EFFORTS
TO REVERSE THE EMBARGO ON MILITARY AID SHIPMENTS TO TURKEY.
THE STORIES CHARGE THAT THE "LEAD" CAME FROM WASHINGTON SHORTLY
BEFORE THE CONGRESS IS DUE TO RECONSIDER THE "ARMS-TO-TURKEY"
ISSUE. THE PURPOSE OF THE LEAK IS PURPORTED BY THE GREEK PRESS TO
BE TO DAMAGE THE CAUSE OF THE GROUP OPPOSED TO RESUMING
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MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY BY SHOWING THAT THE GREEKS HAD

LIKELIKE ACTED IN AN IRRESPONSIBLE MANNER WITH U.S. MILITARY MATERIAL.

2. MOST PAPERS RECOUNT THE ROBERTS VERSION OF THE AMMUNITION'S DISAPPEARANCE WHICH OCCURRED LAST SUMMER DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CYPRUS CRISIS. THEY EMPHASIZE THE LINK TO THE EXPECTED RECONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS IN EARLY SEPTEMBER OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. BASED PRIMARILY ON AN AP REPORT, SOME CITE AN EMBASSY SPOKESMAN AS SAYING THAT THE MISSING AMMUNITION AMOUNTED TO BETWEEN THREE AND FIVE MILLION DOLLARS. (THIS IS INACCURATE. THE EMBASSY SPOKSEMAN HAS NOT COMMENTED BEYOND THE AUTHORIZED PRESS GUIDANCE ON THIS SUBJECT)

3. THE PRESS ACCOUNTS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE U.S. AND GREEK AUTHORITIES ARE COOPERATING TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. A GOG SOURCE IS QUOTED BY THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT THE AMMUNITION WAS NOT SIMPLY TAKEN, BUT "SEIZED OUT OF NECESSITY". COMMENTING ON THE ISSUE, AN AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE SAID IT WAS NOT CONSIDERED SERIOUS, AND THAT A DIGNIFIED COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WOULD BE FOUND. THE SOURCE ADDED THAT THE EVENT OCCURRED IN THE VERY FIRST DAYS OF THE POLITICAL CHANGE IN GREECE AND AT A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY, WHEN THE CYPRUS CRISIS HAD REACHED ITS PEAK AND THE COUNTRY'S ADMINISTRATION WAS STILL WEAK

4. LIBERAL/OPPOSITION TO VIMA HEADLINES "AFTER 13 MONTHS THE AMERICANS 'DISCOVER' THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THEIR ARMAMENT FROM SOUDA". PRO-GOVERNMENT AKROPOLIS BANNERS "FORD BLACKMAILS ATHENS" AND QUESTIONS WHAT LIES BEHIND THE GREAT DELAY IN REPORTING THE DISCOVERY OF THE MISSING AMMUNITION. CONSERVATIVE, PRO-GOVERNMENT KATHIMERINI CLAMORS "STRANGE 'REVELATION' OF SEIZURE OF AMERICAN ARMAMENT AT SOUDA; PURPOSE TO STRENGTHEN WASHINGTON IN THE RESUMPTION OF AID TO TURKEY." COMMUNIST-INTERIOR AVGHI REPORTS "ONE YEAR AFTER THEIR LOSS, KISSINGER DISCOVERED ONLY NOW SHORTAGE OF ARMS AT SOUDA -- PRETEX FOR RESUMING MILITARY AID TO TURKEY." KUBISCH UNQTE ROBINSON

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